FINISHING AND LACQUERING WOODS.

THE proper finishing of wood is a matter of the utmost importance to the furniture and cabinet maker. The proper treatment of the wood itself has much to do with perfect finishing, for the finishing will be unsatisfactory if the wood used has been cut without reference to direction of grain, and that of shrinkage of the fiber, which is at right angles with radial medullary rays. As shrinkage is from the surface inward, the proper plan is to saw from circumference to center. With a straight grain thus insured, the surface is always correct as to the direction of medullary rays, and the work of finishing is facilitated, and in the end the articles are more enduring. Owing to the severe test of extremes of temperature in this country, European furniture, in which the above points have been disregarded, is strongly inclined to warp.

Formerly, our styles of furniture were too greatly influenced by the peculiarities and capacities of wood-molding machines, and thus beauty was sacrificed; but we are moving in very much the same direction as in French fashions of furniture, which have long been regarded as the perfection of art.

There is much yet to be learnt as to the finishing of woods in the way of varnishing. Gum copal—very satisfactory in appearance, and often applied to finish the best work on pianos—is easily ruined by atmospheric and other influences. The Japanese succeed admirably in applying a varnishing lacquer that has no such fragility. We are enabled to give the process: If the wood to be varnished is very porous, the pores are filled with a mixture of stone powder and the lacquer, called *seshime*, which is merely the sap of the varnish tree. This paste is spread over and pressed hard upon the wood with a wooden spatula. When the polish is well hardened, the surface is polished with a soft stone, so that the veins of the wood come out again. The filling process is repeated if necessary. Next, in order to give it a color, the wood is painted over with a thin water color, or it is stained. Thus prepared, the wood is varnished with one thin coating of the lacquer *shionkei*, a lacquer that rapidly hardens, and, in hardening, takes a gloss. If the wood is close-grained, the preliminary work is unnecessary, and the *seshime* lacquer is alone rubbed into the wood with a ball of cotton. After it has been rubbed in, the surface is rubbed with Japanese soft paper, so that in fact only a very thin layer remains. If the Japanese lacquer does not spread evenly—owing to thickness—it is mixed with stone powder, powdered camphor being added to the varnish so as to enable it to flow more easily. There is one thing about the Japanese method of using varnish that is worth knowing, and that is that the atmosphere in which it is to harden is made moist, and the room darkened. For moisture, the lacquered surfaces are placed in boxes wetted with damp towels. It generally requires forty-eight hours to harden the lacquer.

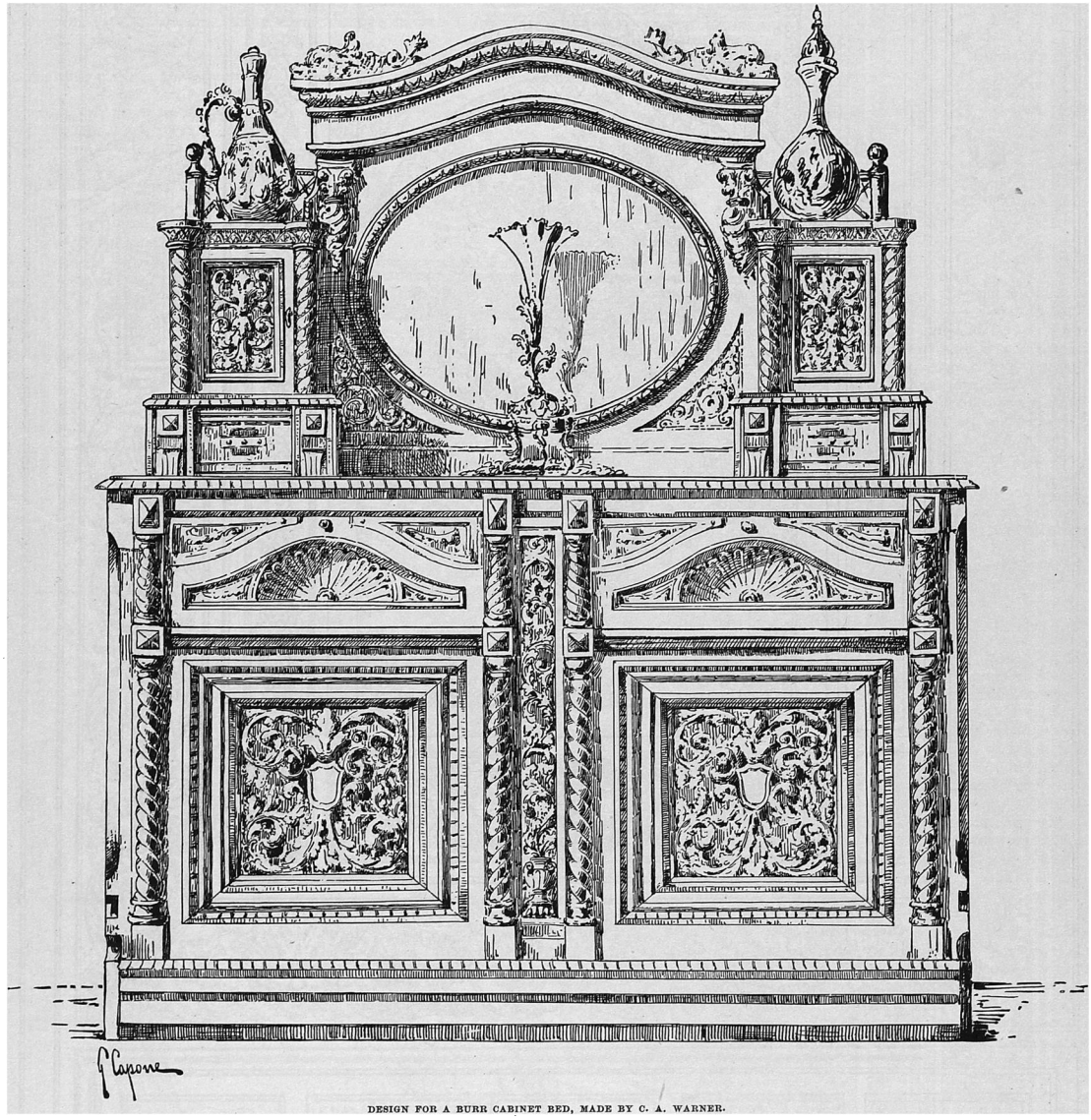
THE plaster cast is the most perfect art reproduction, copying a thing that has only one element—form—to represent. You can buy a head of Laocoön for two dollars, yet rich men pay one thousand dollars for a pretty marble figure of a girl looking at a daisy, and showing a petticoat with sculptured imitation of Hamburg edging, shiny buttons and wrinkled stockings. But the cast is not *real*, he says. Real what? The daisy sculptor has spoilt a good piece of real marble, but the Laocoön head is every inch real statuary, be it made of plaster or gold or mud.—*Edmund Russell.*

ENAMEL COLORS.

THE name of white enamel is given, even now, at Venice, to the threads and filigrees of apaque or milk-white material which decorates the Venetian glasses; but the term enamel is properly reserved to: 1—vitreous compositions, dead-white or variously colored, ground, and laid on with a pencil on glass, porcelain, pottery and metals; 2—to the vitreous preparations of various colors which are melted and reunited, being mosaics designated, as encrusted enamels; 3—the transparent vitreous compositions, translucid enamels in relief Enamel colors being exposed to a high temperature, the materials can only come from the animal kingdom, and are therefore metallic oxides.

The enamel painters in the sixteenth century, when enamel painting made important progress, began by covering the plate of copper with a thinnish layer of enamel, either black or of a deep color. On this the drawing was made by different processes, with white opaque enamel, in such a manner as to produce a *grisaille*, on which the shadows were obtained either by varying its thickness, or scratching it to cause the black ground to appear, the operation being performed before the firing. A few heightenings of white and gold completed the harmony. In colored enamels of this class, the sky, and some parts of the ground, were often expressed by thick layers of color. The piece was, of course, placed several times in the furnace. The colors were susceptible of every kind of combination.

A KNOWLEDGE of art is a question of intelligence, not talent. We study art as we would study English literature: to appreciate the works of the great masters, not to write poetry.—*Edmund Russell.*



DESIGN FOR A BURR CABINET BED, MADE BY C. A. WARNER.